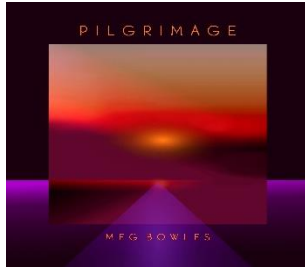


Meg Bowles

Pilgrimage



Not all journeys begin on craggy shorelines or with the first step on a dusty backroad. And many journeys have little purpose. When purpose and soul searching take the trip together however, they need music as a companion. Hence **Meg Bowles'** new album **Pilgrimage**. Bowles has been releasing ambient and other genres of music starting with her 1993 recording of *Inner Space* and *Solstice Dreams*, but her career was launched with the release of her album *Blue Cosmos*. Her latest, *Pilgrimage* is an electronic venture into a world where travel may be instantaneous, but awareness is a long time in coming. For that pilgrimage is within. The collection is six songs, six paths to take on your pilgrimage. They are mostly electronic with piano, or lightly orchestral, and all harmonically rich in texture while being introspective and intriguing. Let's begin as I chronicle this pensive peregrination.

You look up and see the same stars that were born billions of years ago. But who created those stars? The question is so much like a journey. And your quest begins on **Ancient Paths**. The stars are your guide as you go from dawn to dusk and the southern sky leads into the desert. The worn down path is but a single track. Meg's music, in this case, a steadily driving companion, not only beckon's you onto the trail, but energizes your efforts.

Down the pathway you come to the **Cave of Secrets**. Water drips from stalactites, the rocks narrow, and your fears are realized. Much as in your own head, the place you are right now does not seem to have a way of going forward. Meg's soft, echoing piano offers some much needed comfort, but it is your job to choose where to go next.

In the blink of an eye, you find yourself in a **Cloudburst Over a Parched Land**. You look up and catch the rainfall and it is just the elixir you need. At almost ten minutes long, this moody, somber track fully allows you to experience the confusion and fear of deprivation. Like an out of body experience, you feel the desert's relentless heat and witness the vast emptiness. Then along comes this life giving rain. Bowles' smooth ambient textures are like salve on your blistering body. Soft, calming, and healing. Your vision clears and you can see the **Mountains Reaching for Stars**. At over twelve minutes long, it is the most sustained part of your journey. With bright quavers of sound and tiny arpeggios hidden within the notes, your ascension becomes arduous, but not impossible. Meg's theme is one of encouragement as we hope, with every footfall, to touch the heavens. The stratospheric music has an ebb and flow, a yin and yang that connects to the earth in some unseen ways. This was my favorite track on *Pilgrimage*. I played it time after time and it had this soothing, hypnotic sense to it. It seemed to never end.

On the other side we find the **Luminous Garden of Repose**. Prisms of rainbowed light fade in and out over the greenswards. A quite pool, the smell of roses, and the perfect place to relax is what you find. The music is light, delicate, sometimes shimmering as the mood turns to quiet

meditation. And that leads us to the final track, the **Source of Enduring Light**. In the journey of the mind (or spirit) the end justifies the means. The theme turns uplifting, weightless, and rises like a new dawn. And maybe that is the message. Each day is a new beginning, a new start to our journey of peace within and without. Meg's music is very bright, very fervent with a whisper of inorganic voice, a dynamic refrain, and a low bassy background. It was as if voices from on high sang down directly to me. And as in the music itself, a baptism of water is upon me. The pilgrimage is complete.

The six tracks are indeliberately meditative without tricky intros or long, background drones. Although complex on every audible level, the ambient mix is just right to foster the suggested introspective excursion. Bowles has a way to transform long passages of music into dream-like vignettes that are pleasing to mind and spirit. These fantasies are, for lack of a better explanation, musical cocoons of timelessness. I may take up permanent residence there. As like all great talents, Meg Bowles is not just one thing. She is not only a talented composer and multi-instrumentalist, but she is also a licensed psychoanalyst, choral singer, avid gardener, and local wildlife connoisseur. You could add spirit guide to the list, but it was always there. Highly recommended. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews.